

VZCZCXRO4426
PP RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHKI #1309/01 2301259
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 181259Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4627
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY PRIORITY
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA PRIORITY 0008
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0433
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001309

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NOFORN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/18/2016
TAGS: [ENRG](#) [EMIN](#) [ETRD](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IAEA](#) [CG](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: URANIUM SHIPMENT RUMORS UNFOUNDED

REF: A. 04 KINSHASA 103
[1](#)B. 04 KINSHASA 611
[1](#)C. 05 KINSHASA 527
[1](#)D. 05 KINSHASA 731
[1](#)E. 05 KINSHASA 449
[1](#)F. DAR ES SALAAM 1376

Classified By: Econoff W.Brafman for reason 1.4 b/d/e.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Press reports of a possible enriched uranium shipment from the DRC to Iran are unfounded. The DRC has no capability to produce enriched uranium, and Post has no evidence of organized mining at the Shinkolobwe uranium mine. The story likely was planted as a dirty trick designed to discredit President Kabila during a bitterly-contested electoral campaign. End summary.

Press Reports of Tanzanian uranium seizures

[1](#)2. (SBU) An August 6 Sunday Times of London report asserted that in October 2005 Tanzanian authorities stopped a shipment of Uranium 238 ore from the DRC's Katanga province that was destined for Iran via Kazakhstan. The article stated that Tanzanian customs official said the ore was hidden among drums of coltan, another mineral found in DRC. The Sunday Times also cited the July 2005 UN Group of Experts report asserting that the GOT had reported seizing four shipments of radioactive materials (including Cesium and Radium) since [1](#)1996. The Group of Experts said the GOT "left no doubt" that the October 2005 shipment came from Katanga via Zambia.

Uranium sources exist

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Shinkolobwe mine, the uranium source for the Manhattan Project atomic bombs, is the alleged source of the rumored shipment. Shinkolobwe is about 80 miles northwest of Lubumbashi. The mine was closed, flooded and sealed in 1961 and remained inactive until roughly 2002, when artisanal miners in search of high grade cobalt ore trespassed onto the site (reftel D, E). Post has repeatedly visited Shinkolobwe and found no evidence either of extensive artisanal mining or organized mining activities. In fact, EmbOffs visited Shinkolobwe in March 2005 (reftel E), a few months before the alleged October shipment, extensively surveyed the site, and found no signs of activity. Likewise, Tanzanian authorities (reftel F) have denied any such shipment was ever seized. (Note: EmbOff again visited Shinkolobwe on August 9, 2006, and again saw no evidence of organized mining or extensive

artisanal mining. End note.)

¶4. (C) Furthermore, the DRC lacks the capability to enrich uranium, and particularly not to weapons-grade capacity. The country's one reactor, located in Kinshasa (across the country from Katanga, the source of uranium), is mostly dysfunctional and even when new was not weapons-grade capable.

No evidence GDRC involved

¶5. (C) GDRC officials also deny any such shipment took place. Minister of Information Mova Sakani explained that uranium must be concentrated before shipment and that the DRC does not have the capability either to concentrate or to enrich uranium. He also noted that all of the DRC's nuclear-related activities are monitored by International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA).

Comment

¶6. (C) The timing of the story, coming in the midst of Congo's election campaign, and aimed at discrediting President Kabila, is no coincidence. During his May meeting with the Ambassador, Fidel Babala, Chief of Staff to Bemba, who is MLC's head and Kabila's main rival, presented evidently fraudulent letters regarding a supposed deal between Iranians and President Kabila's sister. Babala subsequently tried to suggest a link between the presidency and the uranium seizure during his August 9 meeting with EconOff and PolOff. End comment.

KINSHASA 00001309 002 OF 002

MEECE